WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW WILL HURT YOU!

"It is to the young that I wish to address myself today."
-Pyotyr Kropotkin

THE COVERT ABOLITION OF SLU'S DEI POLICIES

The newly formed "Office of Belonging" is presented as a step Forward, when it is really a regression of DEI policies. The university is using flowery language to disguise its true intentions—dismantling the very policies and initiatives that uphold our Jesuit mission. By claiming that they have "engaged a range of campus stakeholders," they shift the current narrative from being one of targeting DEI initiatives to one of upholding the wishes of those supposedly looking to improve the university.

At the recent "Belonging on Campus" panel hosted by the Student Government Association to address community concerns, Rochelle Smith, former Vice President of DICE and current Chief "Belonging" Officer, claimed that over 200 "key" students were engaged in this process, all targeted because they felt that they didn't "belong" in one way or another. That assertion, while seemingly reassuring, in reality, masks the maliciousness of this change. According to SLU's most recent disclosure, the university has 15,334 students. If only about 200 students were consulted in the creation of this office, then that means that the university only actively engaged 1.3% of the student body in making this change. Surely, the input of 1.3% of the student body was not the leading cause behind the dissolution of DICE; it only leads one to wonder what the leading cause is.

When one investigates the other potential stakeholders that are being referred to, a clearer picture emerges. By simply looking at the Board of Trustees—a group that likely played a

large part in the recent creation of the "Office of Belonging"—it becomes apparent that the stakeholders being referenced are not concerned with the well-being of marginalized students. Is the Senior Vice President of the Bank of America, Marilyn Bush, truly concerned with diversity and equity in a university setting, or is she concerned with the money-making potential of the university? Does the Vice President of Finance Shared Services and Finance Transformation at Boeing, Amy Rodrigues, give a single shit about how we feel, or does she just want to make money and have the student body shut up about Palestine? These are the questions we must be asking ourselves as we encounter this recent wave of anti-intellectualism within higher education.

Many may be asking themselves what the big deal is—to what level DEI policies truly benefit students and the university at large. While much has been claimed in right-wing circles about the destructiveness of DEI policies, the results speak for themselves. DEI policies have been proven to improve student experiences, particularly among women of color, who make up a significant portion of SLU's population. Additionally, the dropout rate and the rate of students earning D's or F's decrease significantly with the implementation of DEI programs.

Moving past the documented benefits, SLU has an ethical responsibility to honor the previous promises it made, particularly as a Jesuit university. Most paramount is the importance of honoring the Clocktower Accords, a set of agreements that made our university stand out in its pursuit of diversity and community organizing. We must pay particular attention to Accord 1 & 2 (increased budget for African American Studies program & increased financial aid resources for retention of African Amer-

ican students at SLU), as SLU's recent multimillion-dollar budget deficit, combined with the Trump administration's increasing pressure to abolish any program that promotes diversity, provides easy excuses to stop funding efforts to improve African American retention rates and to decrease funding for the African American Studies department in general. Though these statements may seem inflammatory or unfounded, there are various relevant examples within other universities, such as the University of Florida terminating all DEI positions in response to both state pressures (a state law banning public funding for DEI programs) and the Trump administration's war against DEI, or Kennesaw State University's "deactivation" of its Black Studies program due to "low enrollment"—students believe they are caving to political pressure under the Trump administration.

Moving forward, DEI programs are the lifeblood of our university's functioning due to our large international student population. Though international student enrollment has been decreasing in recent years, we must acknowledge that theory still make up a significant portion of our university demographics, which is 22% international. This means that there is still a significant portion of students who are actively being victimized by the amerikkkan government. Supporting these students in any way possible is paramount in this time of great persecution, and the potential dissolution of deeply important DEI programs—such as multicultural education workshops for students, faculty, and staff—presents real issues for a significant portion of our student body. This, again, is not fanatical raving—just look at how the "International Student Resources" page devolved from 2023 to 2026. ——————>

2023

2026

This alone demonstrates the university's apathy toward upkeeping the very basic resources available for our international student population. Who's to say they won't take our political climate as an excuse to care even less?

DEI initiatives are also vastly important for the women in our community. 57.2% of the student body is comprised of women. With the dissolution of DEI policies and initiatives, various programs such as the Audre Lorde Scholars program—which has already been undervalued in recent years—could be completely cut.

Finally, regarding our queer community, while the exact number of queer and trans students at SLU is unknown, recent data has demonstrated that more than one in five Gen Z adults—about 22.3%—identify as LGBTQ+, with 2.8% of that population identifying as transgender. If these statistics hold water at SLU, out of 15,334 currently enrolled students, about 3,419 identify as LGBTQ+, and 429 of those students identify as transgender. This is an incredibly significant subset of our population—a subset that could make up the entire enrollment of various departments if consolidated. To disregard the rights of these students in the name of complying with political pressure would be an offense to the Jesuit values that we are founded on, which call for "caring for the whole person—mind, body, and spirit—and encouraging students to become well-rounded people who contribute to the greater good."

The whole crux of this issue—the reason why this is all happening now—lies in the rise of the Trump administration. Though Edward Feser explicitly denied that Trump's policies had any bearing on the dissolution of DICE, the timing of this is simply too convenient for that to be true. Trump's "Compact for Academic Excellence" is a disastrous product of his flagrant lack of regard for the rights of minorities. By requiring a cap of 15% on international student admission, banning affirmative action pol-

icies, and requiring sex-based distinctions in rules around bathrooms and sports, this compact denigrates already marginalized students. If signed by SLU, this compact would upend everything the university claims to stand for as a Jesuit institution. Not only that, it would be directly going against the Clocktower Accords, stripping protections and opportunities from international students, disenfranchizing students from marginalized groups (such as women), and endangering the queer student body—particularly trans students. The university, however, seems to care very little about this. In lieu of signing this compact, the university plans to go forward with its covert dismantling of DEI programs at the expense of large swathes of the student body—and the faculty and staff—in some attempt to reach a compromise with this fascistic regime.

However, this apathy on the part of the university is unsurprising given its recent change in leadership. Newly inaugurated President Edward Feser has a shady past regarding the assurance of students' comfort and safety in the university setting. At his old institution, Oregon State University, he was found culpable in a lawsuit that awarded $600,000 to a former university dean after she came forward about student claims of racism and inaction from another staff member.

Not only that, but when directly questioned if he was "capitulating to the regime" in regard to his failing to protect students from ICE during the aforementioned "Belonging on Campus" panel, his response was a simple, cutting "If you want to call it that, yes." It is no wonder, then, that one of his first actions as president of our university is to undercut our DEI programs. After all, fewer protections for marginalized students, staff, and

FESER'S CASE EXPLAINED

faculty means more privileges on the part of the university to discriminate without threat of robust legal retaliation.

For all of these reasons, it has become apparent that now is the time to resist. As students paying tuition at this university, we have the right to demand certain standards be met. The OccupySLU Coalition has penned a letter expressing our discontent. Through the penning of this letter, we aim to hold the university accountable for its covert dismantling of our DEI programs, which puts large swathes of our university community at risk. It reads as follows:

"We are witnessing intensified targeting and the systematic elimination of diversity initiatives on our campus and across universities nationwide. As the Trump administration's policies home in on DEI initiatives in this pivotal moment, the SLU administration has decided to dissolve the Division of Diversity and Innovative Community Engagement (DICE) and create the "Office of Belonging" to replace it. The Cross-Cultural Center (CCC) will move to the Office of Student Development, and the Center for Social Action will be transferred to the Office of Mission and Identity. In an email sent out the night before the

university's scheduled fall break (October 22nd, 2025), recently inaugurated President Edward Feser unveiled the new office as a "comprehensive reimagining of the work previously led by the Division of Diversity and Innovative Community Engagement." We feel that this wording is insufficient in addressing the concerns of the SLU community. With the dissolution of DICE, the following programs, departments, and initiatives are at risk:

- *Mental health resources for students of color are in jeopardy.*
- *Financial Aid will be affected by the rollback of affirmative action aid programs.*
- *Important initiatives, like those outlined in Accord 2 of the Clocktower accords ("Increased financial aid resources for retention of African American students at SLU"), will be in jeopardy.*
- *Disability Services through CADR will be affected.*
- *There's a risk of delays/denied accommodations, and programs like the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP), a federal program endorsed by the university, may be defunded or dismantled.*
- *STEM and Humanities departments have already had their funding slashed.*
- *Cultural studies programs will be defunded or dismantled entirely.*
- *Cultural clubs could be defunded.*
- *On-campus job opportunities will dwindle.*
- *Mental Health & Community Support Resources tailored to students of color and marginalized groups will be defunded or disman-*

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- *Title IX, conduct offices, and equity trainings will be weakened.*

This 'restructuring' jeopardizes not only faculty, students, and staff's access but also undermines the university's ethical obligations outlined in the Clocktower Accords, a foundational document in SLU's history. When concerns were raised about the continued defense of the rights of our protected classes within the SLU community at a panel with President Feser and other members of the administration, the leaders of this university failed to provide any concrete answers and confirmed that the university will cooperate with any immigration enforcement on campus. We call on the SLU community to oppose this explicit targeting and censorship of academic freedoms and uphold its values as a Jesuit institution. We hope this letter serves as a call to action for both the university community and the administration as they reconsider their recent moves to undermine DEI initiatives."

We hope that you will read this article, see this statement, and be compelled to encourage your department and/or student organization(s) to sign. We hope that you read this and realize the existential threat to our university community. We hope that you read this and take a stand.

RADICAL LIBRARY READING: ASSATA SHAKUR'S "TO MY PEOPLE"

Assata Shakur (1947-2025) was a prolific author, organizer, and Black freedom fighter—being both a member of the Black Panther Party and the Black Liberation Army—who was unjustly targeted by the amerikkkan regime through the FBI's COINTELPRO operations as a result of the valorous actions undertaken by her in the name of Black liberation. An entire wing of COINTELPRO—dubbed CHESROB in her "honor"—is responsible for artificially connecting Shakur to virtually every bank robbery and police killing associated with a Black female suspect on the East Coast during her years working toward Black liberation. In 1973, Shakur was accused of the murder of police officer Werner Foerster during a highway patrol stop and arrested after a national manhunt. Despite maintaining her innocence—repeatedly asserting that her hands were in the air when she was shot twice during the encounter, before the officer was shot by another party in an effort to frame her—she was sentenced to live in prison in an Clinton Correctional Facility. Thankfully, she was able to bravely assure her freedom through her 1979 escape from the institution, before seeking refuge in Cuba in 1984 and living out the rest of her days there peacefully, demonstrating that personal liberation is possible, even in extraordinary circumstances.

In this 1973 letter, Shakur speaks of the necessity to con-

tinue to fight against oppression in the wake of repeated injustice. It is a call for Black people across amerikkka to fight to liberate themselves from the chains of their oppression. Regardless of your race, this reading is essential, as it presents a key framework with which to view Black liberation. As you read, absorb the weight of her words, and reflect on their continued relevance today.

"Black brothers, Black sisters, I want you to know that I love you and I hope that somewhere in your heart you have love for me. My name is Assata Shakur (slave name JoAnne Chesimard), and I am a revolutionary. A Black revolutionary. By that I mean that I am a field nigga who is determined to be free by any means necessary. By that I mean that I can never be free unless all of my people are free along with me. By that I mean that I have declared war on all forces that have raped our women, castrated our men and kept our babies empty bellied.

I have declared war on the rich who prosper on our poverty. The politicians who lie to us with smiling faces and all the mindless, heartless robots who protect them and their property.

I am a Black revolutionary, and as such, I am the victim of all the wrath, hatred and slander that amerikkka is capable of. Like all other revolutionaries, I have been hunted like a dog, and like all other Black revolutionaries, amerikkka is trying to lynch me.

I am a Black revolutionary woman and because of this I have been charged with and accused of every alleged crime in which a woman was believed to have participated. The alleged crimes in which only men were supposed[ly] involved, I have been accused of planning. They have plastered pictures alleged to be me in post offices, airports, hotels, police

cars, subways, banks, televisions and newspapers. They have offered over Fifty Thousand Dollars ($50,000) in rewards for my capture and they have issued orders to shoot on sight and shoot to kill.

I am a Black revolutionary and, by definition, that makes me part of the Black Liberation Army. The pigs have used their newspapers and TV's to paint the Black Liberation Army as vicious, brutal, mad dog criminals. They have called us gangsters and gun molls and have compared us to such characters as john dillenger [sic] and ma barker [sic]. It should be clear, it must be clear to anyone who can think, see or hear, that we are the victims. The victims and not the criminals.

THE REAL OUTLAWS

It should also be clear to us by now who the real criminals are. Nixon and his crime partners have murdered hundreds of thousands of third world brothers and sisters in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Mozambique, Angola and South Africa. As was proven by the Watergate [investigation], the top law enforcement officials in this country are a lying bunch of criminals. The president, two attorney generals, the head of the FBI, the head of the CIA and half the white house staff have been implicated in the Watergate crimes.

They call us murderers, but we did not murder over 250 unarmed Black men, women and children, and wound thousands of others in the riots they provoked during the sixties. The rulers of this country have always considered their property more important than our lives. They call us murderers, but we were not responsible for the more than 6,000 Black people lynched by white racists. They call us murderers, but we were not responsible for the 28 brother inmates and the 9 hostages murdered at Attica. They call us murderers, but we did not murder and wound over 30 unarmed Black students in the Orangeburg Massacre. We did not shoot down and murder unarmed Black students at Jackson

State or Southern State either.

They call us murderers, but we did not murder Martin Luther King, Emmett Till, Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, George Jackson, Nat Turner, James Chaney and countless other Black freedom fighters. We did not bomb four Black little girls in a Sunday School. We did not murder, by shooting in the back, 16-year old Rita Lloyd, eleven-year old Rickie Bodden, or 10-year old Clifford Glover.

They call us murderers, but we do not control or enforce a system of racism and oppression that systematically murders Black and third world people. Although Black people supposedly comprise about 15 per cent of the total amerikkkan population, at least 60 per cent of murder victims are Black. For every pig that is killed in the so-called line of duty, there are at least 50 Black people murdered by police.

Black life expectancy is much lower than white and they do their best to kill us before we are born. We are burned alive in firetrap tenements. Our brothers and sisters O.D. daily from heroin and methadone. Our babies die from lead poisoning. Millions of Black people have died as a result of indecent medical care. This is murder. But they have the gall to call us murderers.

They call us kidnappers, yet Brother Clark Squire (who is accused along with me of murdering a New Jersey state trooper) was kidnapped on April 2, 1969, from our Black community and held on $100,000 ransom in the New York Panther 21 conspiracy case. He was acquitted on May 13, 1971 along with all the others of all 156 counts of conspiracy by a jury that took less than 2 hours to deliberate. Brother Squire was innocent. Yet he was kidnapped from his community and family. Over two years of his life were stolen, but they call us kidnappers. But we did not kidnap the thousands of brothers and sisters held captive in amerikkka's concentration camps: Ninety per cent of the prison population in this

country are Black and third world people who can afford neither bail nor lawyers.

They call us thieves and bandits. They say we steal. But it was not us who stole millions of Black people from the continent of Africa. We were robbed of our language, of our Gods, of our culture, of our human dignity, of our labor and of our lives. They call us thieves yet it is not us who rip off billions of dollars every year through tax evasions, illegal price fixing, embezzlement, consumer fraud, bribes, kickbacks and swindles. They call us bandits, yet every time most Black people pick up our paychecks we are being robbed. Every time we walk into a store in our neighborhood we are being held up. And every time we pay our rent the landlord sticks a gun into our ribs.

THEY ARE THE CRIMINALS

They call us thieves, but we did not rob and murder millions of Indians by ripping off their homeland, then call ourselves pioneers. They call us bandits, but it is not us who are robbing Africa, Asia and Latin America of their natural resources and freedom while the people are sick and starving. The rulers of this country and their flunkies have committed some of the most brutal, vicious crimes in history. They are the bandits. They are the murderers. And they should be treated as such. These maniacs are not fit to judge me, Clark Squire, or any other Black person on trial in amerikkka. Black people should, and, inevitably must, determine our destinies.

Every revolution in history has been accomplished by actions, although words are necessary. We must create shields that protect us and spears that penetrate our enemies. Black people must learn how to struggle by struggling. We must learn much by our mistakes. I want to apologize to you, my Black brothers and sisters, for being on the New Jersey Turnpike. I should have known better. The turnpike is a check

point where Black people are stopped, searched, harassed, and assaulted.

Revolutionaries must never be in too much of a hurry or make careless decisions. He who runs when the sun is sleeping will stumble many times.

Every time a Black freedom fighter is murdered, or captured, the pigs try to create the impression that they have squashed the movement, destroyed our forces and put down the Black revolution. The pigs also try to create the impression that 5 or 10 guerrillas are responsible for every revolutionary action carried out in amerikkka. That is absurd. Black revolutionaries do not drop from the moon. We are created by our environment, shaped by our oppression. We are being manufactured in droves in ghetto streets; places like Attica, San Quentin, Bedford Hills, Leavenworth and Sing Sing. They are turning out thousands of us. Many jobless Black veterans and welfare mothers are joining our ranks. Brothers and sisters from all walks of life who are tired of suffering passively make up the Black Liberation Army.

There is and always will be, until every Black man, woman, and child is free, a Black Liberation Army. The main function of the Black Liberation Army at this time is to create good examples to struggle for Black freedom and to prepare for the future. We must defend ourselves and let no one disrespect us. We must gain our liberation by any means necessary.

It is our duty to fight for our freedom.

It is our duty to win.

We must love each other and support each other.

WE HAVE NOTHING TO LOSE BUT OUR CHAINS.

We must fight on!!

SLU & SODEXO: "WE DON'T KNOW IF WE'RE EVEN GOING TO WAKE UP ALIVE"

Sodexo is a multi-billion-dollar food services and facilities management company headquartered in France, serving the campuses of almost 400 colleges and universities across the U.S., including SLU. Additionally, it operates five prisons in the U.K. and food halls and other facilities at industrial sites (such as mines) worldwide. According to its own website, "*Sodexo has a formal company policy with ethical principles that guide where and how we provide services to prisons. These ethical principles guide Sodexo Justice to ensure we only provide services where we can make a positive difference to prisoners' lives and where the country's prison system matches our values. Sodexo's ethical principles are:*

- *Sodexo will only work with democratically elected governments where the ultimate goal of imprisonment is prisoner rehabilitation.*
- *Sodexo will not provide prison services in countries with capital punishment.*
- *Sodexo will not provide services requiring our employees to carry firearms.*
- *Sodexo has not and will not lobby for tougher prison sentencing laws.*
- *Sodexo has never sought to persuade governments to outsource their prison services and has never knowingly supported any organization with such an agenda.*"

However, upon closer scrutiny, these ethics fall short. The most likely reason that all five principles are focused on the ethics of the corrections system lies in Sodexo's previous partnership

with CoreCivic, America's largest private prison company, wherein Sodexo acquired a 20% stake in the company's operations in America in 1994 and a 50% stake in company's operations in the U.K. and Australia in 1996, becoming CoreCivic's largest foreign
partner. They relinquished this stake in 2001 in response to widespread protests at amerikkkan universities for institutions to cut ties with Sodexo's food services. It can be surmised, then, that these principles are a farce meant to placate public calls to boycott. This assertion is only given more weight when one examines the various human rights abuses occurring in all five of the U.K.'s Sodexo-operated prisons.

SODEXO & THE PRIVATE PRISON INDUSTRY

Sodexo's prison operation in the U.K. should be heavily criticized, especially considering the deluge of human rights abuses carried out at its institutions. In 2013, a case of a woman locked in a "squalid" cell for five years at HMP Bronzefield in Surrey emerged. Sometime between 2015 and 2016, a man was set on fire inside his cell at HMP Forest Park in Pendlebury. Also at HMP Forest Park in 2016, multiple prisoners were found to have been recorded naked and acting like dogs while under the influence of the drug "spice," likely smuggled into the prison by guards. A 2019 inquest found that the 2017 death of Annabella Landsberg, a prisoner at HMP Peterborough in Peterborough, was entirely preventable and due to the prison's neglect in providing adequate care for chronic conditions.

Moving forward to the current day, two prisoners at HMP Bronzefield died within days of eachother in July of this

year, one as a result of unmonitored and unregulated drug detox. One current prisoner is quoted as saying, "It's so sad what's happened here today. There is no proper healthcare at all... That's two (dead) in less than two days. This woman that died last night, she was really young and she was detoxing. Women are so scared to actually go to sleep now because we don't know if we're going to even wake up alive...The healthcare here is dire. are so scared to actually go to sleep now because we don't know if we're going to even wake up alive...The healthcare here is dire. Women are dying, they are dying here unnecessarily. These are young women who don't need to die."

Also at HMP Bronzefield this year, a young trans man imprisoned at the institution was "...consistently misgendered and mistreated by staff at the prison. Despite repeatedly disclosing that he was suicidal, he was placed in the prison's 'healthcare' unit, a wing known for housing women with severe mental health issues, rather than being given appropriate support." He killed himself inside that very unit a few days later. According to reports from within the prison, this "healthcare" unit is known for its extreme neglect and dehumanization of patients.

A report by "The View" magazine, a "grass-roots social enterprise and campaigning platform that gives voice to women in the justice system, provides an outlet for creativity, and creates for financial independence," states that women in crisis

imprisoned at HMP Bronzefield have been held in cages, ignored, and "forced to resort to dirty protests to have their voices heard." Additionally, there is no resident GP (general practitioner) at the prison after 7 PM, despite the claims on Sodexo's website. In fact, a GP is almost completely absent in the day-to-day healthcare operations of HMP Bronzefield, with the unit instead being run by two nursing practitioners (NPs)—Harriet Tizard and Dave Wilkinson—who are both being investigated by the Nursing and Midwifery Council for discriminatory practices and failing to provide adequate care.

All of these facts are particularly disturbing when one takes a second look at how women with chronic—or even terminal—conditions are treated at this institution. A petition circulating on Change.org puts this issue into perspective. Within it, it details accounts of women being chained down while receiving chemotherapy, not being taken to necessary radiotherapy appointments, not being told what kind of cancer they have, being falsely declared to be in remission, dying from lack of treatment while imprisoned after being released, and much more.

With this medical malpractice in mind, it is hard to believe it can be much worse. To this, I say, "believe it." While we in amerikkka have our own set of problems regarding the right to protest, those in the U.K. face a similar, but distinct set of issues. Members of Palestine Action, a formidable pro-Palestine organization that participates in direct action protests against the UK's arm industry, have been arrested, jailed, and abused under the UK's Terrorism Act 2000 for peaceful, nonviolent protests. A handful of these prisoners—six, to be exact—began a hunger strike at various UK prisons, two of which are operated

by Sodexo. As of January 14th, 2025, the remaining hunger strikers ended their strike, but we are none the wiser to what conditions they faced in their three months denying food or water. One can only presume, what with the other abuses, that it was nothing short of hellish.

While these instances all take place in the U.K., Sodexo provides "food for staff and prisoners, maintenance and, in some cases, prisoner skills training, education and programs," in 84 other prisons throughout Europe and Chile. While Sodexo claims not to profit from any of these operations, press releases—particularly its "Fiscal 2023 Results above guidance, Pluxee full spin-off expected early 2024"—suggest otherwise. While they claim to work in a humanitarian partnership with capped gains, this financial report tells investors the opposite: that the company's profit and revenue grow in accordance with its increasing contracts with correctional facilities. They expand facilities management and government contracts, then report a subsequent margin increase when they take on larger contracts. In layman's terms, they profit from the imprisonment of others worldwide.

While all of this is horrible and more than enough reason to call for SLU to find a new dining partner when the university's contract with Sodexo is up later this year, it is only the tip of the iceberg. When one examines the entire scope of Sodexo's operations, previously unknown and disturbing ways of abusing human rights are unveiled.

SODEXO AND THE ABUSE OF WORKERS OUTSIDE THE "WESTERN WORLD"

As mentioned earlier, Sodexo operates hundreds of

food halls and other facilities at industrial sites worldwide. However, the way in which workers are treated from site to site varies greatly, and appears to be largely dependent on the nation in which the site is located. While Sodexo workers in the "western" world face their own group of challenges (more on that later), Sodexo workers outside of the "western" world are marginalized to an extent that is hard for the amerikkkan mind to conceive.

Unions are effectively prohibited by Sodexo, and work-Pueblo Viejo gold mine are paid as little as $224.30 a month; in Colombia, workers are paid no more than the legal minimum wage of $283.24 a month; and in Guinea, Sodexo workers who work at the Simandou iron mine are paid as little as 33 cents an hour. Also at the Simandou iron mine, native Guinean workers report being forced to eat in segregated dining halls, away from the white "expat" workers. Women in Colombia are forced to take pregnancy tests as a condition of their employment. Additionally, workers in all of the aforementioned countries have reported unsafe working conditions, ranging from a lack of safety equipment when working with chemicals or entering mines, to being fed spoiled food and being subsequently hospitalized.

Overall, the treatment of Sodexo workers outside of the "western" world is inhumane at best and monstrous at worst. These accounts are taken from a 2011 report from the TransAfrica Forum titled "Voices for Change: Sodexo Workers From Five Countries Speak Out", and this very report concludes that "Sodexo consistently fails to live up to the standard set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that 'everyone who works has the right to just and favorable remuneration ensuring

for himself and his family an existence worthy of human dignity.'" I am inclined to agree.

However, while it is incredibly necessary to recognize the mistreatment of workers internationally, it is equally vital that we unpack the woes of Sodexo workers domestically, within the U.S., who are not immune to the cruelty of this corporation.

SODEXO AND THE ABUSE OF WORKERS WITHIN AMERIKKKA

Sodexo workers in the U.S. are consistently mistreated and face a deluge of offenses. While multiple lawsuits have been filed internationally, the vast majority of verdicts that have been in favor of the workers have occurred within amerikkka. This is due in large part to the increased resources of amerikkkan workers relative to those outside the "western" world, particularly in terms of workers' rights legislation. With this in mind, it is important to note that Sodexo has paid $105,588,000 in penalties since 2000, with the largest offense type being employment discrimination. Given Sodexo's shady history regarding its operations in the U.S., this is unsurprising.

An extremely large portion of Sodexo workers in the U.S. work within food halls at institutions of lower and higher education. From coast to coast at these institutions, there are innumerable reports of labor abuses on the part of Sodexo. In 2010, hundreds of students at Ohio State University protested for the university to cut its contract with Sodexo, alleging union busting on the campus and forcing some female workers to take pregnancy tests as a condition of employment. Additionally, Sodexo has busted unions in Orlando at Rollins College—ano-

ther example out of hundreds at higher education institutes throughout the country. They failed to pay workers for weeks at Pepperdine University. Most notably, as recently as 2024, they violated the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) so egregiously that the US Department of Labor publicly sided with the plaintiff. And in October of 2025, dozens of Sodexo workers and student supporters rallied at Southern Connecticut University to protest Sodexo's stalled renewal of their food service contract—a move taken as a clear response to workers' demands for higher pay and better benefits.

All of these incidents denote a pattern of ignoring workers' rights, disregarding the human right to healthcare and fair compensation, and generally treating workers as cogs in a machine, not individuals who are made in the image of God. Regrettably, these same patterns transfer over to St. Louis, where many workers report mistreatment at the hands of Sodexo and students alike, with the latter being largely ignored by Sodexo and institutional authorities. This demonstrates that these issues are not isolated, and that this is a local manifestation of nationwide and international patterns—a manifestation that has developed deep roots in St. Louis.

SODEXO AND THE ABUSE OF WORKERS IN ST. LOUIS

Sodexo workers in St. Louis are treated much the same as any other Sodexo worker at an amerikkkan institution—that is, terribly. One internet search of "St. Louis Sodexo issues" unveils numerous tales of mistreatment. In 2019, workers at Webster University pushed for a $15 an hour wage, citing their average pay of $10.56 an hour as too little to support themselves. This, paired with a refusal to offer adequate vacation and sick

days, led to intense worker dissatisfaction. In 2020, at SLU's very own hospital, workers rallied for adequate hazard pay and better protections in the face of unsafe working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic. The hospital refused these propositions, which included free COVID testing for all essential workers, claiming that they had done enough. More recently, at Washington University, workers were left in the dark during restructuring that occurred over winter break during the 2023-2024 school year as the university transitioned to Sodexo. Most notably, they were forced to rebid for shift times, demonstrating an intense disregard for workers' time. This resulted in a worker having to quit their job, as they had to decide between working the shift they were assigned or picking their children up from school.

While all of these stories are deplorable, one must keep in mind that these stories are the ones that made the news. A quick look at Indeed.com's job review page on Sodexo, toggled to the St. Louis area, and you're met with a wall of horrible text. "What is the most stressful part about working at the company?" one questions reads, to which the replies are: "Dealing with scandalous managers" from an executive chef, "Not having enough income to support my family at times" from a housekeeper, "The stressful part is they change your hours without your consent," from a dishwasher, "Leadership, disconnected business practices, poor operations, favoritism, poor decision making with leadership," from an administrator, and many more questionable reviews from people in various positions. One particularly awful review dates back to as recently as October 23rd. Written by a Sodexo housekeeper, it reads "Discrim-

ination, harassment & overly weird coworkers. Managers be scared of their own employees. Don't work here, you'll regret it! No overtime & no paid sick leave."

Clearly, Sodexo operations in the St. Louis area are as unethical as their operations across the U.S. From the refusal to offer a livable wage—both at Webster University and beyond—to the malicious disregard of workers' rights during the rebidding process, to the blatant carelessness with workers' safety during the COVID pandemic, this company abuses its workers in unforgivable ways. It is for these reasons that we, as students, must demand that SLU terminate its contract with Sodexo.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE WORKERS?

It is a fair criticism that, if SLU cuts its ties with Sodexo, the workers will face unemployment. This is a genuine concern; however, it should not inhibit us from looking at the larger picture. These workers are exploited by a larger system that is out of their control. By working at Sodexo, they sacrifice much of their autonomy, and disregarding their struggles in the name of progress would be a disservice to everyone. The solution, then, is not to disregard the workers and their struggle—and potential struggles if the contract fails to be renewed. The solution is to listen to the concerns of the workers, address them, and retain the current staff as we transition to a new, self-sufficient dining system.

The idea of a self-sufficient dining system may sound far-fetched, but it has been achieved many times over at universities even larger than SLU. The most notable example is the University of California in Santa Cruz (UC Santa Cruz), which created a groundbreaking, in-house dining system after they cut

ties with Sodexo in 2004 in response to student concerns over labor issues with Sodexo and the university's lack of sustainable, healthy dining options. By working with a student group—Students for Organic Solutions, who then formed the Food Systems Working Group at UC Santa Cruz's annual "Earth Summit"—the university was able to transition to a self-sufficient food program, which it has maintained ever since

If Sodexo mistreats its workers so blatantly, and a self-sufficient dining option has already been demonstrated to not only work but also be enjoyed by the students who use it, then what is holding SLU back from transitioning to this system? The answer lies in SLU's multi-million dollar budget deficit. If SLU were to cut ties with Sodexo—or any other contracted dining service, that is—and retain the workers as SLU employees, the university would be required to pay them a livable wage. If the University is already struggling financially, why would they go out of their way to pay Sodexo workers fairly?

The answer lies in SLU's supposed principles. Under SLU's "About SLU's Catholic, Jesuit Identity" page, it states, "At SLU, we encourage asking hard questions and looking beyond easy answers. What does ethical leadership look like in the 21st century? How can we help improve the lives of the incarcerated or underprivileged children in St. Louis? How do we work to end systemic racial inequity?" Not only that, it states "SLU doesn't just talk the talk—we walk the walk...Inspired by the Jesuit call to be men and women for others, at SLU ideas become actions, and serving others is a way of life." If SLU truly seeks to learn what ethical leadership looks like, it must first aim to

exemplify it. If SLU wants to improve the lives of the incarcerated or underprivileged children in St. Louis, they can start by paying those parents employed at their institution via Sodexo a livable wage. If SLU aims to work toward ending racial inequality, it can treat its Black and Brown Sodexo workers with respect—workers who make up a considerable amount of the total Sodexo working population. Clearly, then, SLU isn't doing a lot of "walking the walk"—it's acting hypocritically to protect its bottom line: turning a profit.

As a supposed Jesuit institution, this behavior is totally unacceptable

P.S. SODEXO AND THE MORMON CHURCH

If all of this is not enough for you—if you still believe that SLU is justified in renewing its contract with Sodexo—then maybe this will change your mind: with every new or renewed contract, more money is going into the hands of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS Church)—a.k.a the Mormon church. In 1998, Sodexo merged with Marriott International for its U.S. operations. Marriott International was founded by the Marriott family, who are devout multi-generational proponents of the Mormon faith and who still remain significant shareholders in leadership positions. According to the theology of the Mormon church, all devoted members must tithe 10% of their income to the church. Therefore, with each new or renewed contract, there is money going into Marriott International, which then goes to the Marriott Family, and is then taxed at 10% to the Mormon church.

As a Jesuit institution, should we really be lining the pockets of those we consider to be heretics? Though this word

is harsh, it is the only accurate descriptor. Should we fund the continuance of baptisms for the dead, proto-pagan belief systems (look up the "Heavenly Mother"), promotion of polygamy in the afterlife, the dissolution of the Holy Trinity, neocolonialism in "non-western" nations, and the overall deterioration of the Catholic Church? I don't think so.

CONCLUSION

If SLU is the Jesuit institution it claims to be, then this cannot stand. How can a University that claims to uphold such high moral standards stoop so low? For the sake of argument, I will assume that SLU's administration is unaware of the unconscionable human rights abuses that Sodexo has undertaken. If this is the case, and if SLU is truly a Jesuit institution, the administration will read this information and make the appropriate changes, regardless of how it affects their "bottom line." However, I am inclined to believe that they are aware of at least some of these abuses and continue to work with Sodexo regardless. While I don't want to believe this, I do believe it, and that is due to SLU's sordid history of disrespecting human rights.

Our institution is built on dehumanization. It is built on the backs of those whom the University and the Jesuits dehumanized, enslaved, and brutalized. It is built on the backs of professors and students who were discriminated against due to their gender, age, ability, and/or race (see Murphy vs. Saint Louis University, Amir vs. Saint Louis University, and Horn vs. Saint Louis University for recent examples). It is built on the backs of students who were illegally monitored under COINTELPRO (look at the FBI's vault if you don't believe me). SLU tries to ignore these facts, the same way that it ignores Sodexo's wrong-

doings. Our institution is built on the ideal of "brushing it under the rug," and I refuse to let them brush this under the rug.
As students, we must rise up and make our voices heard. We must demand that this behaviour on the part of administrators is unacceptable and that it must come to a stop. We must do this by any means necessary, in the name of upholding true Jesuit values. Call Edward Feser's office; plan a protest; organize in ways that guarantee our voices are heard. Remember that what is at stake if SLU fails to cut ties with Sodexo is not something trivial: it is our very humanity. To protect it, we must take action.

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW WILL HURT YOU!